

events in the numerator may have a 95 percent confidence interval that is wider than the rate itself.⁵ Caution should be used when interpreting those rates in Table 3 that are less than 2.0, as these rates generally reflect fewer than 20 observed cases.

Since the North Carolina Birth Defects Registry uses a passive surveillance system with secondary data sources, the state data will tend to underestimate the actual occurrence of birth defects. Unlike cancer, birth defect reporting from hospitals or physicians in North Carolina is not mandatory by law.

CONCLUSIONS

The primary goal of the North Carolina Birth Defects Registry is to collect and analyze data on infants with birth defects. The Registry's purpose is to provide health care providers and policy-makers with information necessary to plan, develop, and implement strategies for the treatment and prevention of serious congenital malformations. The State Center for Health and Environmental Statistics is currently evaluating the utility of the Registry for better serving the needs of the public and the medical community. We welcome your comments or suggestions.

REFERENCES

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